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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 007508

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [FR](#) [EUN](#) [NATO](#) [TU](#) [CY](#) [UNO](#)
SUBJECT: APPROACHING FRANCE ON TURKEY-EU

REF: A. PARIS 7102

- [1](#)B. PARIS 6946
- [1](#)C. PARIS POINTS OF 11/14
- [1](#)D. STATE 189542 (NOTAL)

Classified By: DCM Karl Hofmann for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Widespread public opposition to Turkish EU membership in the run-up to France's presidential elections severely limits the GOF's flexibility in dealing with the Turkey-Cyprus issue, notwithstanding Chirac's foreign policy prerogatives and his long-standing pro-Turkish sentiments. While France could accept even temporary solutions to push the issue past France's May elections, failure to achieve anything by the time of the EU Summit could compel the GOF to support and perhaps even take the lead in pushing for a hard-line response. Even if Turkey fails "on the merits," we believe it may still be possible to leverage Chirac's interest in Lebanon and the Middle East, as well as his desire to avoid a "clash of civilizations," to persuade him of the need to reduce the consequences for any such failure vis-a-vis the EU to an absolute minimum. Given that Chirac himself will need to be convinced, the President may have to engage him at the Riga Summit, followed by A/S Fried and U/S Burns with French Political Director Araud and NSA Hadley with Presidential Diplomatic Advisor Gourdault-Montagne. End summary and action recommendation.

French Room for Maneuver
(and Political Courage) Limited

[1](#)2. (C) Per ref A meeting between Interior Minister Sarkozy's diplomatic advisor and EUR DAS Matt Bryza, the leading French presidential candidates and their parties -- as the National Assembly's recent majority vote in favor of criminalizing denial of the so-called Armenian "genocide" aptly demonstrated -- will probably not be in a position to take a more positive view of Turkey at least until after the end of the Chirac presidency. Likely center-right presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy is on record as opposing Turkish EU membership (and FM Douste-Blazy has an interest in pleasing Sarkozy as a means of being retained in the Cabinet if Sarkozy is elected president). The recently designated Socialist Party candidate, Segolene Royal, has not gone beyond acknowledging that any decision on Turkish membership would be subject to popular referendum -- as now mandated by the constitutional amendment that Chirac pushed through before the May 2005 referendum in an attempt to deflect, at least in part, popular opposition to the EU constitutional treaty. Thus, even if Chirac's prerogatives in foreign policy remain largely intact even as his presidency draws to a close and his influence begins to wane, as a practical matter his room for maneuver for dealing with Turkey has been significantly reduced as a result of growing public sentiment against not only Turkish accession, but enlargement in general. Moreover, his decision during his visit to Yerevan

to call on Turkey to recognize the Armenian "genocide" has itself been largely perceived as having opened wider the gate to anti-Turkish sentiment.

France Needs a Fig Leaf

¶3. (C) Per ref B meeting with MFA A/S-equivalent for Europe Gilles Briatta, France has supported Finnish Presidency efforts to find a solution to the current impasse and would also find a way to live with any kind of temporary arrangement -- ideally one that would enable the GOF to push any further decisions down the road until after the early May final round of the presidential elections. If no exit is found, however, Briatta also made clear that France would not fail to react to Turkey's failure to implement the Ankara Protocol -- even if Briatta stopped short of specifying what that reaction might entail. Per ref C, Minister-Delegate for Europe Catherine Colonna warned the Turks following the last meeting of EU foreign ministers that such a Turkish failure would not allow accession negotiations to proceed "as if nothing had happened," adding that it would be incumbent on the Council to "draw conclusions" from Turkish obduracy. Although she was careful to say that "no one" had asked for a complete suspension of accession negotiations in the event of no progress, she suggested that anything was possible short of total suspension (which no one wanted) and complete inaction (which France rejected). To prepare effectively for the December 14-15 EU Summit, she called on the Finnish presidency to circulate its recommendations "well before" that date, or by December 6 at the latest.

Avoiding the Worst By Leveraging Middle East Issues

¶4. (C) It may be possible to leverage Chirac's personal

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stake in supporting Lebanese sovereignty, his interest in improving the situation in the Middle East, and his self-defined role in preventing a "clash of civilizations" to encourage the GOF privately to support a course of action toward Turkey that, at a minimum, "does the least possible harm." Our sense is that it would not be overly difficult to convince Chirac, and the GOF more broadly, that it is not in France's or Europe's interest to alienate Turkey, the only successful Muslim democracy, at a moment when its support is critical for UNIFIL/Lebanon, the Middle East, and Afghanistan. Nor would Chirac want the "loss of Turkey" to be part of his legacy. Our message would have to be that we are not asking France to ignore Turkey's omissions in fulfilling its commitments to the EU, but rather to seek to push a confrontation down the road in the name of a larger strategic interest.

Approaching the French

¶5. (C) On tactics for France in responding to ref D, Post will continue to approach French officials as before, but the President should consider approaching Chirac directly on the margins of the NATO Summit in Riga. Ideally, we get the Germans on board with such an approach, so that the French position can be depicted also as showing a willingness by France and Germany to work together responsibly in the pursuit of Europe's larger interests. Finally, U/S Burns and A/S Fried should follow up with French Political Director Gerard Araud during his visit to Paris December 5-6. France presumably would have knowledge of the Finnish proposals by that time, and A/S Fried could engage directly with Araud on French thinking for the end game, with follow-up by U/S Burns (with Araud) and NSA Hadley (with Chirac's Diplomatic Advisor Gourdault-Montagne) as required.

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